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FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5527  
INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 8939  
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY 4972  
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI PRIORITY 4455  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA PRIORITY 1697  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2066  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 2035  
RHMFIISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY  
RHMFIISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 004902

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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2026

TAGS: KDEM PGOV KE

SUBJECT: ARMENIAN THUG RETURNS TO KENYA? THE LATEST DISTRACTION FROM GOVERNANCE

REF: A. NAIROBI 2626

1B. NAIROBI 156

1C. NAIROBI 1114

Classified By: A/Political Counselor Craig White for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Opposition leader and presidential hopeful Raila Odinga claims there is a plot to assassinate him involving one of the Armenian "mercenaries," who is back in Kenya. Odinga's outrageous claims have proven at least partly true in the past. The Armenian may be back, but we trust that even Kibaki administration hotheads understand that assassination is beyond the pale. Unfortunately, this latest chapter of a bizarre tale is further distracting Kenya's elected officials from the important business of governing. END SUMMARY.

The Saga Continues

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12. (SBU) Raila Odinga, recently in the U.S. and Canada drumming up expatriate Kenyan support for his presidential bid, returned home to an alleged assassination plot against him. People close to the government, including a cabinet minister, met in early November, he claimed, and hatched a plan to eliminate him and other ODM-Kenya officials. Odinga further alleged that the plot involved one of the Armenian "mercenaries" who were deported, or at least removed, after a major security breach at Nairobi's main airport (Ref A) on June 8. At that time, the government was criticized for simply sending them away, as opposed to deporting them, which requires legal proceedings and would bar them from quiet re-entry. One of the brothers has returned, Raila alleges.

Not the First Time

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13. (C) Odinga and other opposition leaders have previously been concerned that the government would retaliate against them. Following the Odinga-led Orange team's victory in the November 2005 constitutional referendum, Raila believed his life was in danger. He told the Mission in January that government security forces were keeping a very close eye on him (Ref B). After the government's raid on the Standard Media House in March, there were rumors of the imminent arrest of Odinga and other politicians highly critical of the government (Ref C). More recently, Kalonzo Musyoka, also an opposition presidential hopeful, told the Ambassador he

feared for his safety.

¶4. (C) Comment: Several months ago it would have been easy to dismiss Odinga's claims about the mercenaries as another ploy by an opposition politician with an insatiable appetite for attention. While Odinga is that, he turned out to be right about the "Armenians in our midst." He could be right again, although we have no evidence to support his claim. The assassination plot is a little harder to swallow, but assassinations of government rivals have figured in Kenyan politics in the past. We trust that in the post-Moi era, even the hotheads know that an assassination at that level would result in backlash the government would not want to face. Unfortunately, this strange saga is further distraction from issues that need serious attention from lawmakers, such as personal security for Kenyans. END COMMENT.  
RANNEBERGER